proposal for assistance for diversification process has so far been received by the Ministry of Agriculture from the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Crop damage due to unseasonal rain in Andhra Pradesh

166. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether unseasonal rain in the first week of January ,2002 has adversely affected and damaged the Groundnuts, Paddy, Bengal, Gram, Tabacco, Maize and Cotton crops in several districts of Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether the hailstorms also inflicted heavy damage to crops in many districts;

(c) whether Central Government were approached by the State Government for help to meet the situation and provide relief to farmers; and

(d) if so, what is Government's response in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEONARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (d) Ministry of Agriculture have not received any such report or request from the State Government for the purpose of assistance from National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF).

Steering Group on Agriculture

167. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether report of the Steering Group on Agriculture and Allied Sectors has since been received;

(b) if so, what are its main recommendations, especially with regard to retaining 500 million youths to the farm sector;

(c) whether the committee has also proposed a scheme for development of waste land in a big way all over the country and warned Government of water shortage, emerging as a major issue in the near future; and

(d) if so, what is the decision of Government and the steps being taken on each of the recommendation?